

Fall History & Heritage -- #5 (October 22)

Most of our entries this week are based on assigned readings in *The Christian Almanac*, authored by George Grant & Gregory Wilbur and published by Cumberland House.

the Mayflower --- (Almanac, Sept. 6)

Just 90 feet long and 26 feet wide, **this ship** set out from Plymouth, England, on September 6, 1620, on one of the most famous voyages in history? The vessel carried 101 passengers, many of whom were pious Christians separated from the Church of England (Separatists), victims of much verbal abuse from the ship's crew. Two months and five days at sea ended in what is today southeastern Massachusetts, one of the places where the seeds of American self-government (republicanism) were sown.

Chester A. Arthur --- (Almanac, Sept. 20)

This New York Republican (1830--1886) moved from vice president to president of the U.S. when Ohio's James Garfield was assassinated in 1881? Decent men feared the worst from the New Yorker's administration, seeing how he had abused the public trust in his native state by lavishing posts & favors on his friends & allies (the so-called "spoils system"). Thus it was more than surprising when, in Washington, D.C., he supported a merit-based, exam system for government jobs (civil service system).

William McKinley --- (Almanac, Sept. 6)

A Republican politician and one-time Ohio governor, **this U.S. president (1843--1901)** was assassinated by an anarchist in Buffalo, New York, on September 6, 1901? Like his fellow Republicans, his policies, including high tariffs to protect domestic industry, aimed to promote the interests of bankers, industrialists, and the captains of mass commerce. He also succumbed as president to heavy pressure, economic as well as political, to go to war with Spain over Cuba (1898).

Honorius III (Cencio Savelli) --- (Almanac, Sept. 11)

This medieval pope (r. 1216--1227), known to history as "the Great Pacificator," was beloved as a man of scholarship, piety, and peace? His mediation reduced conflict in European nations, while his guidance shaped the rules governing three monastic orders (Dominicans, Franciscans, & Carmelites) and two universities (Paris & Bologna). He didn't live to see, however, what he desired most: the spiritual revival of the Church and the liberation of the Holy Land (Palestine) from Muslim domination.

Catechisms --- (Almanac, Sept. 13)

The "little questions and answers" of **these Christian instructional booklets**, said lexicographer Samuel Johnson, "afford us a glimpse at the inner framework of the Western view of the world"? Medieval monks like Alcuin of Britain and the Swiss-German Benedictine Notker Labeo were among the first to compile such booklets. But it was the 16th-century (1500s) Protestant Reformers, especially Luther, who revived the didactic method and turned it into a scholarly art-form.

Francis of Assisi --- (*Almanac, Sept. 20*)

In an angelic vision upon a mount in 1224, **this celebrated medieval monk (c. 1181--1226)** was reportedly commanded to offer the divine gifts of poverty, chastity, and obedience to his brethren and the world? Even more mysteriously, when the angel departed, the saint is said to have received the scars of Christ's crucifixion, the sign of the stigmata, on his own body (the monk's hands, feet, & sides). The saint, his sacrificial piety, and his supernatural encounter are truly the stuff of legend.

Booker T. Washington: Up From Slavery --- (*Almanac, Sept. 18*)

In post-Civil War, post-emancipation America, few did more than Booker T. Washington (1856--1915) to foster cooperation and reconciliation between the races.

The excerpt below from his "Cotton States' Exposition Address" (1895) reveals his characteristic appeal to fellow Negroes to improve themselves by education, labor, and service to their communities. He also exhorts white Southerners (& Americans) to aid and receive Negro contributions to the commonwealth in a manner befitting a wise, compassionate and civilized people.

In all things that are purely social we can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress. There is no defense or security for any of us except in the highest intelligence and development of all. If anywhere there are efforts tending to curtail the fullest growth of the Negro, let these efforts be turned into stimulating, encouraging, and making him the most useful and intelligent citizen. Effort or means so invested will pay a thousand percent interest. These efforts will be twice blessed—blessing him that gives and him that takes. There is no escape through law of man or God from the inevitable: The laws of changeless justice bind oppressor with oppressed; And close as sin and suffering joined, we march to fate abreast.

Seems as though Booker T. insisted upon neither forced integration of the races nor full equality, which may indeed explain why he has fallen out of favor in our day. He urged his fellow blacks to imitate submissively the civilized mores and works of white Anglo-American society and serve patiently their neighbors in their towns and cities. His confidence, to be sure, was that over time troubled race relations would improve. Suspicion would give way to greater trust, alienation to comradeship.

In the 20th-century, not long after Washington's death (1915), some influential Americans would grow impatient with what seemed like perpetual segregation and inequality. They would opt for a more confrontational and forthrightly political approach to civil rights.